



# Frequently Asked Questions

How will reorganization impact

**Ministries & other institutions**

## **Will ministries in the Diocese be affected in response to Chapter 11?**

Chapter 11 is merely a means to carry out a financial reorganization, and will not be the cause of the closure of any ministries of the Diocese. At the same time, however, the Diocese will continue to review and assess its various ministries, priorities and the needs of those it serves, while balancing those needs against the imperative that its operations must be financially sustainable into the future.

## **Will there be any impact on cemeteries owned by the Diocese or on proceeds from pre-paid costs by those making arrangements in advance for themselves or their loved ones?**

No. Catholic Cemeteries, which are held as separate legal entities, are outside of the Diocese. Such assets are not available for the Diocese to use to pay its liabilities, including claims of victims. The grounds will continue to be maintained.

## **Will Catholic Health (the group of Catholic hospitals of the Diocese) of the Diocese be affected?**

No. Catholic Health is a separately incorporated Not-For-Profit corporation, and will not be included in the Chapter 11 filing or directly affected by it.

## **Will regional schools or parish schools be affected by Chapter 11?**

No. Regional schools and parish schools are separately incorporated entities, and will not be included in the Chapter 11 filing.





## *What Are We Doing to Create a Safe Environment for All?*

## *What we have done and are committed to doing.*

The Diocese of Buffalo pledges its unqualified commitment to insuring our parishes, schools and every entity connected to our Diocese are safe and holy environments for all. We wish to share what we have done and are doing.

- 1** Established an Independent Review Board for the Diocese of Buffalo, to offer guidance in responding to allegations. The Board is comprised mostly of lay professionals with expertise in law enforcement, mental health services and legal advocacy.
- 2** The Diocese appointed a Victim Assistance Coordinator who receives complaints and coordinates professional assistance for victims.
- 3** Initiated and implemented policies to prevent sexual abuse and harassment; and regularly provides training to all clerics, employees and volunteers within the Diocese.
- 4** The Diocese promptly reports all allegations of abuse to the appropriate civil authorities.
- 5** The Diocese has undertaken canonical proceedings, which can include laicization of proven offending clerics. Laicizing means a priest is permanently removed from the priesthood.



Under the promulgation of the **Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002**, the Diocese of Buffalo:

**1** Enhanced its Review Board, particularly with the addition of lay professionals with extensive experience in law enforcement, the provision of mental health services and legal advocacy.

Strengthened its relationships with law enforcement officials throughout the Diocese, in all eight counties.

**2**

**3** Reviewed its past responses in individual cases and, when appropriate, removed offenders from public ministry.

Strengthened the screening process for men applying as candidates for ordination as priests and permanent deacons.

**4**

**5** Instituted background checks including criminal history, for clerics, educators, employees and volunteers.

Developed Codes of Conduct and educated clerics, educators, employees and volunteers concerning their applicability in specific settings.

**6**

**7**

Publicized contact information for the Victim Assistance Coordinator and offered to all clerics, educators, employees and volunteers training on the process of reporting allegations.

Encouraged victims to report to civil authorities and to seek assistance. In addition, the Diocese has continued to report contemporary and past allegations to appropriate civil authorities.

**8**

**9**

In 2003, the Diocese launched a program to retrain all who work for the Diocese, in parishes, schools and in our affiliated agencies. Safe Environment Training and background checks are renewed every three years.

In 2003, the Diocese established the new Office of Safe Environment which oversees Virtus training for all Diocesan employees.

**10**

**11**

Conducted background checks and provided training for more than **25,000** clerics, educators, employees and volunteers since 2002

This is renewed every 3 years. The Diocese of Buffalo has been found in compliance with all provisions of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in annual, independent audits that began in 2003 and continue to date.



“

We pledge most solemnly to one another and to you, God's people, that we will work to our utmost for the protection of children and youth.

We pledge that we will devote to this goal the resources and personnel necessary to accomplish it.

We pledge that we will do our best to ordain to the diaconate and priesthood and put into positions of trust only those who share this commitment to protecting children and youth.

We pledge that we will work toward healing and reconciliation for those sexually abused by clerics.

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Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People - USCCB

## How can I report suspected abuse?

If you believe that a child is in immediate danger, call 911 or your local police department. You can also make a report to the New York State Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-342-3720.

## What help will the Diocese provide victims?

To victims of abuse: You do not have to deal with this alone. The Diocese of Buffalo promises to:

**Listen with  
compassion &  
understanding to  
your story and to  
investigate fully**

**Provide help  
with spiritual  
guidance**

**Provide the  
names of  
advocates, support  
groups, counselors  
& individual  
therapists**

**Protect  
your  
privacy**

The Diocese and those who minister with victims understand that coming forward with a complaint might be difficult - even frightening. We sincerely want to ease your pain and help you find healing. We'll also provide a link to individuals not associated with the Diocese who can help you.

## How does the Diocese pay for settlements with victims?

Settlements were funded from a variety of sources – including the Diocese’s pooled, self-insurance program and accumulated reserves – with the largest amount having been paid through insurance coverage.

## Have priests been removed from ministry when claims of sexual abuse of a minor were proven or acknowledged?

Yes. The Diocese confirms that all priests who have either acknowledged or proven allegations of sexual abuse of a minor have been removed from ministry. A list of priests and the dispositions of claims resolved since the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People in 2002 can be accessed at [buffalodiocese.org](http://buffalodiocese.org).

## Is the abuse of children still happening?

To the best of our knowledge, there are no cases of abuse at this time. The Diocese has not had a report of contemporary sexual abuse of a minor since 2006, but we remain vigilant through ongoing awareness, training and adherence to Diocesan policy. Diocesan policy requires law enforcement to be notified whenever officials find someone is abusing a child.

## Does the Bishop of the Diocese regularly meet with abuse victims?

As a matter of practice in policy, the Bishop regularly meets with abuse victims. This can be an important part of the healing process for those who have been harmed. Victims who wish to arrange a meeting with the Bishop should contact the Victim Assistance Coordinator at 716-895-3010.

## How does the Diocese investigate an allegation? Are lay people involved?

Upon receiving notification of a complaint, regardless when it occurred, the Diocese conducts its own investigation, which is then reviewed by the Diocese’s Independent Review Board, comprised of lay experts in law, child protection, law enforcement and psychology. If the allegation concerns a minor, law enforcement is contacted first.

## What is the role of the Independent Review Board and who are its members?

The Independent Review Board of the Diocese of Buffalo functions as a consultative body that considers allegations of inappropriate conduct by members of the clergy or Diocesan employees, and makes recommendations to the bishop. This board, comprised of lay men and women of relevant expertise in law enforcement, the provision of mental health services and legal advocacy, advise the Diocesan bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors, or inappropriate behavior toward adults, makes recommendations about the suitability of the individual accused to continue in ministry or employment. The Review Board regularly reviews Diocesan policies and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse of minors. Any allegation of sexual abuse toward a minor is first reported to law enforcement authorities. A list of members is online at [buffalodiocese.org](http://buffalodiocese.org).

## Has the Diocese made settlements with victims of clergy sexual abuse?

The Diocese has previously paid approximately \$18 million to victims of sexual abuse through the Diocese of Buffalo’s Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program.



## IN THE DIOCESE OF BUFFALO...

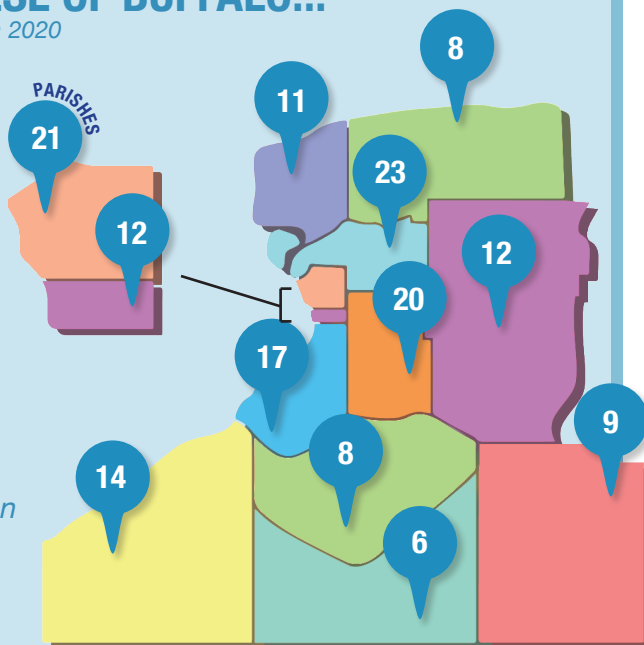
*Most current stats from 2020*

**12**  
VICARIATES

**161**  
PARISHES

**571,000**  
CATHOLICS

*1/3 of the population  
of WNY*



**30,371**

Total Students in  
Catholic Schools  
and Education  
Programs



**332,383 assisted**  
in Outreach Service Programs



**158,455**  
of Catholic  
Households



**2,646**  
Infant  
Baptisms





*Additional information about the reorganization  
can be found at:*

**[buffalodiocese.org/reorganization](http://buffalodiocese.org/reorganization)**



The Diocese  
of Buffalo